

Re: H.B. No. 5266 (RAISED) AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE  
FOR THE SHAKESPEARE THEATRE IN STRATFORD.

To the Commerce Committee:

As volunteer chair of Stratford's Economic Development Commission, I want to voice support of any bonding the state of Connecticut can provide for the long-delayed redevelopment of the Festival Theatre in Stratford, Connecticut. As the creator of the Stratford Chamber of Commerce in 1981, I struggled to maintain financing to keep world-wide recognition of the Theatre and watched with despair as the Theatre collapsed and closed. I've watched that Treasure crumble unnecessarily since that time. I've watched this community continue to suffer as tourism melted away and as commercial and retail opportunities, and as commercial and retail success, dribbled away.

I could cite you fact and figure as to how tourism is a mighty economic tool and how much money tourism pours into local, state and national economies. You've seen it and read it already. You've seen how it has impacted New Haven and Stamford and East Haddam; how it brings people and money and prestige to those economies and how it helps brand those communities. I don't have to repeat that.

But, I do have to say, as Chair of Stratford's Economic Development Commission that Connecticut's failure to invest in the Festival Theatre is damaging Stratford's retail success and it's preventing us from attracting and rejuvenating our once burgeoning tourism industry. We want to help pour Tourism money and retail success and investment money back into State coffers, but we can't do so without the lynch pin of investment, and that lynch pin rests in your hands today.

We ask that you pick up that responsibility.

Sincerely yours,

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*Neil Sherman*

Neil Sherman  
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